

Opportunities for the Alaskan Way Viaduct – Envisioning a Better Future

October 15, 2001, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Bell Harbor Conference Center

2211 Alaskan Way, Pier 66, International Promenade

Meeting Summary

Meeting Objectives

Pat Serie welcomed the group, outlined the agenda, and reminded the group that at the last Leadership Group meeting, the project team presented ‘pure concepts’ of a bored tunnel, aerial structure, cut and cover, and a boulevard. At tonight’s meeting, the team will be presenting a mix and match of those concepts, which appear to be the most promising conceptual alternatives. The objective of the meeting is to present the conceptual alternatives to the Leadership Group and hear feedback, reactions, and questions about the information.

Fast Track to Project Completion

Dave Dye, Washington Department of Transportation, Urban Corridors Office, presented the project schedule, groups that will be involved in the project, and funding needs. To continue design and evaluation of the conceptual alternatives, WSDOT will be asking the Legislature for additional funding. Currently, there is approximately \$5.5 million available for the project, and it is estimated an additional \$50 million will be required to select and design the preferred alternative.

Moving Toward Conceptual Alternatives

Boris Dramov, The ROMA Group, discussed with the group his involvement in the project as an urban designer and the integration of urban design. Boris has worked on waterfront in the United States and around the world for the past twenty years, including San Francisco, Portland, and Sydney, Australia. To think about urban design at the same time transportation facilities are being re-thought yields the best results. The entire transportation system should be looked at in terms of what effect it has on the city as a whole. Issues that need to be considered, including conflicts with local access and through movements; historical and future uses of the waterfront; and development of open space or enhanced areas for pedestrians.

Bob Chandler, City of Seattle, provided an update on the condition of the seawall along and under Alaskan Way. The same team that is working on potential viaduct solutions is looking at the condition of the seawall as the solutions may be linked together or dependent on each other. There are approximately 7000 feet of seawall along the waterfront, made up of different types of seawalls that were built at different periods in time. There are portions of the seawall that are vulnerable to liquefaction in the event of a seismic event and it is believed that there was liquefaction during the earthquake in February 2001. The team will spend the next two to three months looking at the condition of the seawall so that its true condition is understood.

Robert Spillar, Parsons Brinckerhoff, provided an update on the transportation demand forecasts that has been completed over the last month. Today, the modeling information relates to the region and system-wide demands for movement. The information presented today has already been provided to the engineering team and has driven the definition of the conceptual

alternatives. The next step will be to model the conceptual alternatives to determine how much trips each of them will handle. Major findings to date include:

- Additional north midtown access will result in fewer trips on arterial streets.
- The existing Battery Street tunnel with only two lanes is a constraint on the system. If additional lanes were provided through the tunnel or another tunnel was added, more trips would use SR 99.
- Improvements at the south end, including Spokane Street, may also result in fewer trips on arterial streets.
- The traffic demand for the corridor requires at least three lanes of traffic in each direction. If that capacity is not provided, more trips will be made on arterial streets leading to Alaskan Way potentially being a major boulevard or arterial.

Tom Madden, WSDOT, presented the first conceptual alternative, which consists of the following major elements:

- Aerial structure from Spokane Street to SR 519
- Bored tunnel through Midtown under Western and First Avenues
- Bored tunnel connection to Elliott and Western Avenues
- Bored tunnel under Battery and Wall Streets

Issues and opportunities associated with this conceptual alternative include:

- Providing access to the downtown core as on and off ramps from the bored tunnel is not feasible.
- Connections to Aurora Avenue North in addition to the existing Battery Street tunnel.
- Lanes would mainly use the open space along Alaskan Way for trips access the downtown core.
- A solution to the seawall would still, most likely, be required.

Bob Chandler presented the second conceptual alternative, which consists of the following elements:

- Aerial structure from Spokane Street to SR 519
- Cut and cover tunnel through Midtown
- Cut and cover connection to Elliott and Western Avenues
- Bored tunnel under Battery and Wall Streets

Issues and opportunities associated with this conceptual alternative include:

- A cut and cover along Alaskan Way may provide a solution for fixing the seawall as well as replacing the existing viaduct.
- New movements in the downtown core would be feasible.
- Possibilities exist along Alaskan Way of opening up the waterfront for increase pedestrian, transit, and bicycle uses.

Tom Madden presented the third conceptual alternative, which consists of the following elements:

- Aerial structure from Spokane Street to SR 519
- Aerial structure through Midtown
- At grade connection to Elliott and Western Avenue s
- Cut and cover under Battery and Wall Streets

Issues and opportunities associated with this conceptual alternative include:

- Providing access for traffic during construction of an aerial structure along the waterfront may require a temporary structure next to the existing one.
- A solution to the seawall would still, most likely, be required.
- A cut and cover tunnel along Wall Street to connect to Aurora Avenue North may be required which would have significant impacts to existing buildings.
- There are opportunities to make an aerial structure less of an impact along the waterfront environment, including creating a building on the east side of the structure to block noise on the surrounding communities.

Feedback on Conceptual Alternatives

The following issues and questions were raised by members of the Leadership Group in reaction to the conceptual alternatives:

- Is there an opportunity to turn the trolley along the waterfront into a more modern form of transit and provide connections to Magnolia, the sports stadiums, etc.?
- It might be more pedestrian-friendly to integrate transit with the lanes of traffic rather than next to the promenade so that pedestrians are right next to moving cars.
- Are there preliminary cost estimates for the conceptual alternatives or relative scales of cost?
- There are opportunities with this project to reconnect Queen Anne to the south Lake Union area by depressing Aurora Avenue North farther north than it is today (past the Battery Street tunnel) so that the street grid can be reconnected. This would allow for improved east-west movements, which is a significant issue for the city.
- Has there been discussion to date of moving the ferry terminal for car access?
- Has Broad Street been looked at as a potential connection to Aurora Avenue North rather than Battery or Wall Streets.
- Have property constraints or impacts been looked at as these alternatives were developed? There is concern about impacts to existing or planned projects, such as the Sculpture Garden.
- Connections through the 'Mercer mess' and improving access to Queen Anne would both be benefits that should be looked at by the project team.
- There is significant concern about the disruption and impact on the Belltown neighborhood if a cut and cover is further explored along Wall Street. This is perceived

as a significant flaw and may mean that the aerial structure should no longer be pursued or other options for connecting to Aurora Avenue North identified.

- It is important to continue to maintain the views from the viaduct today.
- What impact would a seismic event have on a cut and cover along Alaskan Way?
- Is it worth building an elevated structure between the Port facility and BNSF railroad yard? Will the Port still be there by the time the structure is built?
- The cut and cover conceptual alternative appears to be most promising because it fixes the seawall and transitions at the north and south ends seem to have less of an impact. The bored tunnel does not appear to be realistic given the need for eight lanes along Alaskan Way and the aerial structure's connections to the north of the Battery Street tunnel have too many impacts.
- The cut and cover alternative appears to have the most promise as it addresses the seawall problem. The Elevated Transportation Company (ETC) and Alaskan Way Viaduct urban designers and project team should continue to coordinate efforts.
- The ETC should look at technologies that may be able to operate at grade, which would allow it to potentially use Alaskan Way.
- The cut and cover alternative shows most promise as it solves the seawall problem and provides access to downtown Seattle and residential areas.
- Connections to Spokane Street could be very beneficial and should be further explored.
- The Port is interested in participating in any financing discussion about the project.
- Improved access to downtown is critical.
- The development opportunities are going to be a key part of the project and should be balanced with any property take.
- It is important that WSDOT and the City have a contingency plan in place in the event of an earthquake before a replacement facility is constructed.
- The project should look at potential connections and/or stations for the Sound Transit commuter rail line.
- An integrated schedule of all of the transportation projects, including decision making and construction, would be helpful to ensure that as much coordination as possible is taking place.
- The cut and cover alternative accomplishing fixes for the seawall and the viaduct seems to be a good expenditure of public funds.
- It is important that the project emphasize the benefits of any of the solutions for the entire state, such as improvements to freight access.

Next Steps

The next meeting of the Leadership Group will be in January; a meeting date and location will be sent out shortly. Open houses will be held in November and information on them will be published on the project website at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct.

Leadership Group Participants Present:

Name	Affiliation
Warren Aakervik (for Stephan Lundgren)	Ballard District Council, BINMIC
Charlie Chong	West Seattle
John Coney	Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board
Lee Copeland	Weinstein Copeland Architects
Joni Earl	Sound Transit
Steve Erickson	Magnolia Community
Dave Gering	MIC
Tom Graff	Downtown District Council
Jim Guenther (for John Musgrave)	West Seattle Chamber of Commerce
Doug MacDonald	Secretary of Transportation
Mary McCumber	PSRC
Connie Niva	WSTC
Ron Posthuma (for Paul Toliver)	King County DOT
Harold Robertson	ETC
Charles Roeder	University of Washington
Don Royse	Seattle Design Commission
Judy Runstad	Foster, Pepper, Shefelman
Paul Schell	Mayor of Seattle
Tom Tierney	Port of Seattle
Paul Tomita	Seattle Planning Commission

Guests and Project Team Attendees:

NAME	AFFILIATION
Boris Dramov	ROMA Design Group
Chris Marr	Washington State Transportation Commission
Alinda Page	Trans-Actions, Inc.
Harold Robertson	ETC
Chris Rogers	Seattle Art Museum
Susan Sanchez	City of Seattle
Burr Stewart	Port of Seattle
John Reilly	JRAI
Candy Hatcher	P-I
Larry Lange	Seattle P-I
Bob Chandler	City of Seattle
Denna Cline	City of Seattle, SPO
Susan Crowley	City of Seattle, OIR
Richard Miller	Seattle Transportation
Kristen Nielsen	City of Seattle
Steve Pearce	City of Seattle
John Rahaim	City of Seattle, Design Commission
Liz Rankin	Seattle Transportation
Claudia Cornish	WSDOT
Dave Dye	WSDOT
Kimberly Farley	WSDOT

Carol Hunter	WSDOT
Tom Madden	WSDOT
Linda Mullen	WSDOT
Paul Gilbert	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Richard Page	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Mike Rigsby	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Jared Smith	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Jeanine Viscount	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Karl Winterstein	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Pat Serie	EnviroIssues
Amy Grotefendt	EnviroIssues
Brooke Belman	EnviroIssues
Jennifer Cannon	EnviroIssues

Leadership Group Members Not Present:

NAME	AFFILIATION
Bruce Agnew	Cascadia Discovery Institute
Scott Blackman	Argosy
Mic Dinsmore	Port of Seattle
Christine Endresen	Kitsap County
Dan Evans	Daniel J. Evans & Associates
David Goodyear	David Goodyear & Associates
Jerry Grinstein	Madrona Investments
Joel Horn	Wright Runstad
Peter Hurley	Transportation Choices Coalition
Stephen Lundgren	Ballard District Council
Richard McIver	Transportation Committee
John Musgrave	West Seattle Neighborhood
Jane Nishita	Qwest
Patty Otley	BNSF
Neil Peterson	Flex Car Program
Dwight Sutton	Mayor of Bainbridge
Paul Toliver	King County
Doug Vann	Pioneer Neighborhood
Bob Watt	Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
Jim Young	Seattle Steam Company